

## “Elevating Faculty Potential”

Presented by Eric Kaufman, Faculty Representative to Virginia Tech’s Board of Visitors

In March, the Board took several actions related to faculty that are worth highlighting and celebrating.<sup>1</sup> First, I thank you for recognizing Linsey Marr and Carla Finkelstein with the *Ut Prosim* Scholar Award. It is important to recognize and support the exceptional work of faculty like Linsey and Carla, because their work inspires other faculty and students at Virginia Tech. The Board also conferred new Distinguished Professor<sup>2</sup> appointments and approved faculty members for endowed professorships<sup>3</sup> or fellowships. You may be aware that the University held a Faculty/Staff awards program in April,<sup>4</sup> with many of those recognitions sponsored by the Virginia Tech Alumni Association. A goal for the university might be to have all awards come with an allocation of funds. Among faculty recognition areas that may be overlooked are the appointments to the Academies of Faculty Service and Leadership.<sup>5</sup> In the current structure, there are no financial advantages bestowed on members of the Academies of Faculty Service and Leadership, yet Virginia Tech relies heavily upon such individuals to fulfill shared governance roles and responsibilities. Personally, I regret that I have not nominated a wider array of individuals for the Academies of Faculty Service and Leadership, because I believe we have many more faculty embracing the *Ut Prosim* spirit of the academies than have been recognized.

You may wonder why faculty must be involved in Virginia Tech’s shared governance system, rather than simply relying upon the work of quality administrators. To start, it is important to recognize that universities operate differently from businesses. In fact, the Principles of Accreditation from SACSCOC<sup>6</sup> require Virginia Tech policy decisions be based “on the authority of faculty in academic and governance matters” (p. 23). Accordingly, faculty members play critical roles with the 28 commissions, committees, and councils that compose Virginia Tech’s governance system.<sup>7</sup> As participants and decision-makers in shared governance, faculty members are critical partners in reviewing the university’s curriculum, developing and maintaining appropriate policies related to academic matters or faculty employment, and helping to establish the university’s mission-related priorities. The Faculty Senate’s annual report for 2020-21 (Appendix A) acknowledges faculty review of 34 resolutions that advanced through the University’s governance process. Beyond participating in the formal governance process, faculty play a critical role in problem solving and maintaining a positive organizational culture. As a point of reference, Jack Finney, our Vice Provost of Faculty Affairs, said the following about Bob Hicok, who was this year’s inductee to the Academy of Faculty Service: Bob “has the ability to steer conversations toward important topics and toward outcomes that work for faculty and the university.”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://vtx.vt.edu/articles/2021/03/bov-march2021-overview.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://faculty.vt.edu/faculty-recognition/distinguished-professors.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://faculty.vt.edu/faculty-recognition/endowed-chairs.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://vtx.vt.edu/awards/facstaff2021-1.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://faculty.vt.edu/faculty-recognition/academies-faculty-service-leadership.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/2018PrinciplesOfAccreditation.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://governance.vt.edu/ccc.html>

In my August report to the board,<sup>8</sup> I highlighted the work of Linsey Marr as “the epitome of Virginia Tech’s land-grant mission,” and it was highly appropriate for the Board to recognize her work. While Linsey represents the epitome of our land grant mission, her stardom is the result of several strong relationships. Linsey is by no means a lone star faculty member, as a recent *Wired* magazine article<sup>9</sup> points out. When Linsey found herself at an impasse with the World Health Organization, she turned to Tom Ewing, a faculty member in another college at Virginia Tech, who in turn enlisted the support of Katie Randall, an exceptional graduate student in a department separate from Tom’s academic home. Such relationships are at the heart of our work at Virginia Tech. And, those investments in meaningful work advance the University’s reputation, including recent recognition in the *Times Higher Education* Impact Rankings,<sup>10</sup> which assesses universities against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. With continued support from the Board of Visitors, I am confident faculty will continue to make progress in addressing global challenges. Thank you for your work to elevate faculty potential by helping to ensure a collaborative and positive work environment.

In conclusion, I thank you for a very productive year. I have enjoyed serving the faculty and the University as a member of the Board of Visitors. I appreciate the board’s attention to faculty concerns and hope the board will continue to find ways to acknowledge the contributions of all faculty members, including those who make investments internal to the University as well as those whose impact is internationally visible.

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[https://www.facultysenate.vt.edu/content/dam/facultysenate\\_vt.edu/bov-constiuecy-reports/Kaufman%20BOV%20Report%20-%20August%202020.pdf](https://www.facultysenate.vt.edu/content/dam/facultysenate_vt.edu/bov-constiuecy-reports/Kaufman%20BOV%20Report%20-%20August%202020.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.wired.com/story/the-teeny-tiny-scientific-screwup-that-helped-covid-kill/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://vtx.vt.edu/articles/2021/05/unirel-rankings.html>

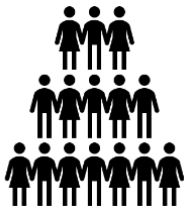
## 2020-21 Annual Report\*

### Senate Roster & Representation



Membership included 92 Faculty Senators, representing 71 academic units, across 9 colleges (plus the University Libraries).

### Meeting Attendance



Convened 15 meetings of the full senate, with an average attendance of 76 individuals (62 senators and 14 guests).

In total, 176 different individuals participated in Faculty Senate meetings (including senators and guests).

### Prominent Guests for Q&A Sessions



- Tim Sands, University President
- Cyril Clarke, Provost & Executive Vice President
- Horacio Valeiras, Rector for Board of Visitors
- Noell Bissell, New River Health District Director

### Notable Presentations



- Academic Bullying Considerations (Bryan Hanson)
- Climate Action Commitment (CUS Resolution 2020-21A)
- Faculty Open Access Policy (Ginny Pannabecker)
- Modifications to Policy 13015 (COR Resolution 2020-21B)
- Undergraduate Honor System (Kara Latopolski)

### Other Significant Discussion Topics



- Adaptations to Promotion and Tenure (P&T) in Response to Pandemic
- Standardized Test Requirements for Admissions
- Expectations for Instruction During the Pandemic
- Experiential Learning and Bridge Experiences
- Revisions to Shared Governance
- Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) Reporting

\* As outlined in the Faculty Senate Bylaws (VII.A.1.b), this report has been prepared for distribution to the senate, faculty, administration, and Board of Visitors. More detailed information is included in meeting minutes, available on the Faculty Senate website: <https://www.facultysenate.vt.edu/>

### Ideas/Topics Highlighted for Future Attention



- Assessment of Instruction (Including SPOT & Peer Review)
- Faculty Senate Policy Oversight
- Google Workspace for Education
- Services for Students with Disabilities
- Software Licensing and Procurement
- Undergraduate Admissions' Use of Standardized Test Scores

### Surveys & Reports



Facilitated a university-wide faculty/staff survey on Fall 2020 planning that yielded more than 3,000 responses.

Co-sponsored a town hall on COACHE Survey of Faculty Job Satisfaction, highlighting faculty insights on how to improve the workplace.

### Structural Improvements Through Constitution & Bylaw Amendments



- Affiliation of college faculty associations (and representatives)
- Expansion and balancing of senate membership
- Oversight of Faculty Senate committees
- Transition of secretary/treasurer role to operations officer

### University Governance Resolutions Considered



The Faculty Senate Cabinet considered 34 resolutions that were advancing through university governance. Of those, 8 resolutions were advanced to the full senate for comment, including resolutions from the Commissions on Faculty Affairs, Research, and University Support.

### Public Statement



In solidarity with Virginia Tech's Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) community, the Faculty Senate formally adopted a statement condemning the acts of violence committed against members of the APIDA community.

### Recognitions



After serving in Faculty Senate officer roles for four consecutive years, Bob Hicok and John Ferris have earned membership in the Academy of Faculty Service and the Academy of Faculty Leadership (respectively).